

CHAPTER III.

ETHNIC TRINITY OF KAVIRI.

101 The generic name used of these peoples by themselves is Ja-Luo. The Kavirondo people call them Awa-Nyera. A very common term for them is Wa-Nila.

231 *Modes of subsistence.*—They all live by agriculture. They reside in fixed
241 villages of from ten to fifty huts. Nearly all the villages are surrounded by
241 euphorbia hedges; formerly many villages had mud and occasionally stone walls, but this custom has died out. They breed cattle, sheep, goats, and fowls.

227 *Hunting and fishing.*—They dig pitfalls for elephants and also spear
226 elephants. They catch large quantities of fish in the Lake Victoria Nyanza by means of large conical wicker traps "dema." The process is as follows:—They have two enormously long ropes; one end of each rope is secured on shore, and the ropes are then paid out into the lake, one rope floats on the surface and from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks; the other rope is a ground rope, and is weighted with stones, and the two ropes are connected at intervals. By means of canoes these ropes are gradually brought round in a semi-circle the size of which gradually decreases. The fish rush shorewards to escape from the drawing in of the net, and rush into the mouth of the big wicker traps which are placed in a row in the shallow water near the shore. At the same time the women walk up and down dragging smaller meshed traps in which they collect myriads of tiny fish the size of a sardine. They fish a great deal at night by torchlight. They state that they got the best hauls of fish after rain; in the dry season they catch comparatively few. Rafts of ambatch wood are used for laying out the net (ambatch is a very light spongy wood growing on the lake shore; it has a prickly bark). They split and dry large quantities of fish and carry it inland from the lake for considerable distances to sell for grain.

227 Lines and hooks are also used to a certain extent by the Nyakach people and
227 others. The people bordering the lake possess a few dug-out canoes and also a few of the new canoes bought from Uganda or Banga.

441 *Bridges.*—They build rough bridges of timber across the rivers when in flood, but not suspension bridges like the North Kavirondo.

264 *Cooking, etc.*—They cook in earthen pots inside their huts, and also in the
252 verandah of the huts. All cooking is done by women. The food is served up in little baskets. The father eats with his sons; they generally eat in a little separate hut with open sides built for the purpose. Women eat separately and inside the house.

372 *Fire.*—They know the use of firesticks but rarely used them, as they can always obtain a glowing ember from one or other of their neighbours.

Their huts are very similar to those of the Bantu Kavironda, but they are a 342
trifle lower, and are generally built solely of reeds (*matua*). The huts are dug out
inside to a depth of 18 inches or 2 feet; the hut is plastered with the earth dug
out from the interior.

There are two fire-places in each hut, and the customs previously enumerated 357
about stopping at the first or second cooking place are the same as among the
Bantu Kavironda.

Young girls sleep in a hut with the other girls of the village in the case of an 373
old woman. The boys of the village sleep in a hut by themselves. The village 361
are roughly circular. The huts are not arranged in any particular order, but the
huts of one man are generally side by side. The huts of the young men are 383
usually near the gates, and they are supposed to watch the gates in case of any
attempt being made to steal the cattle.

On entering a village the hut directly opposite the gate is generally the hut of 361
the principal wife of the headman of the village, or the headman of that part of
the village.

Food products.—Mlams, sweet potatoes, a little wine, Indian corn, and also 241
pumpkins, cucumbers, and yams (*yaji*). Bananas are occasionally grown, but they do
not flourish, as the country is a little too dry for them. A little tobacco and
Indian hemp are grown. The Indian corn is not ground but generally eaten in
an unripe state.

Ironwork.—They do not smelt iron, neither do they forge their hoes, which 325
are all imported from Siam. They however forge spears, knives, bill hooks, axes, 437
etc., from Siam iron. Among the Gemi tribe only people belonging to a clan 258
called Uvira forge iron; the smiths are called Yothet-th. A rough kind of salt is
made from the ashes of reeds and grass, and salt is also imported from Kisingiri.

Death customs.—When a person dies the body is immediately taken out of the 764
house. Upon the death of a woman the brothers-in-law of the deceased dig the
grave in the verandah of the house of the deceased; the corpse is buried on its left
side with the head under the head; the body is doubled up. A man, on the
contrary, is buried on his right side with the head under the head. In the case of
a woman her relations and friends come and wail; her husband prevents each clan
that attends with a grat, the mourners stay three days.

The hut in which a person has died is used for a month; the neighbours 767
then meet and drink *twaka*, and the house is broken down. Upon the death of a
man his brother digs his grave; if the first wife he married is still alive he is
buried in her house; if she is dead the man is buried in the verandah of the hut in
which he died.

Men only wail for one day, after that only women wail; the women wail for 765
the whole of the first three days; after that the women of the village wail at dawn
for fifteen days.

Signs of mourning.—Women wear a string of bananas three round the
forehead, they also wear a tail of white strings for about a month; the tail usually

FISHING IN THE KAVIRONDO GULF, LAKE VICTORIA.

By C. M. DUNN.

HISTORY OF THE INDUSTRY.

- 228 Although fishing by natives along the shores of the Gulf has been carried on from time immemorial, it was only in 1905 that the fishing industry proper was started by Mr. Aarup, a Norwegian, who found by experience the best size and kind of nets to use.

- 227 Mr. Aarup, who was almost blind, appears to have done a lot of pioneer work in the industry, and definitely proved that the best mesh was what is known as the 5 inch. This gives a mesh of about 2 inches square. At first shoremakers' twine was made into nets locally, but this was not successful partly owing to the inferior lasting qualities of the twine and partly owing to the slipping of the knots which allowed the fish to escape. Trials were also made with cotton nets of thicker thread. These nets however took no Carp (Ngege and Mbiru) but caught Kingies (Pears). Subsequently nets were obtained from Messrs. Wm. Barbour, Ltd., London, Ireland, and these were found

- 438 so successful that they ousted all the locally made articles and are the only sort used at present. These nets are sold in the Kiunga Bazaar at a price of Shs. 17/- to 18/- and are 100 yards long, 5 inch mesh and 20 mesh deep, 25 twine three ply. They are of a drab colour and the thread is very fine. White and tanned nets are useless. Trials were made with thicker twine (No. 20) but the catches were small.

The average life of a net is said to be about 20 days, but in the hands of Europeans they have a longer life and sometimes last up to two or three months unless they meet with accidents as when a crocodile gets entangled in them.

In 1911 when the industry was more flourishing than it is to-day up to 20,000 nets were imported annually from Ireland.

RESTRICTIONS:

- 228 The use of nets with a mesh of under 1 inch square is forbidden by law. Trawling is also forbidden except in water of 10 feet and over, and at a distance of not less than a quarter of a mile from the shore; this means that trawlers cannot be used in the Gulf as it is all very shallow.

* A large number of nets are also supplied to the Kiunga Bazaar by Messrs. Joseph Gundry & Co., Liverpool. There is also a certain demand for White Nets.—Editor.

226 The total catch of the 20 traps was therefore 38 Ngege, 1 Mami, 2 Mbiru, 1 Ninge, and 1 Sire, i.e., 43 fish in all.

We left the Kibos river at 9-30 and went on towards the end of Kach Bay seeing numerous fish eating birds on the way.

LINE WITH MULTIPLE HOOKS.

There were also quite a number of natives in canoes and one of these to whom we spoke was working a long line called by the Jajuo Mugondo. This is a very long line weighted at one end with a stone. At intervals along it are hooks fastened to the main line by short lengths of thinner line and baited with pieces of fish mostly Fulu. It is also buoyed at intervals by floats of ambatch (Mburu) wood. The native in the canoe holds the other end. The hooks of some of these lines we saw were the ordinary barbed variety bought in the shops but one man had barbed hooks evidently locally made.

They were very sharp and curved almost into a complete circle, while the point was slightly bent to one side. I tried to buy this line from the owner but he refused to part with it.

WEIRS AND TRAPS, NOT IN RIVERS.

Along the shore and end of Kach Bay, near the mouth of the Nyando river, we saw two other varieties of fish weirs called by the Jajuo Osegeru and Bwanza, something on the principle of the river weir (Kak).

The Osegeru resembles a mass and is made of papyrus stalks (Dholuo, Togo) driven into the bottom of the Lake and fastened together and forming a barrier through which the fish cannot pass. As far as I can discover the fish in the course of their peregrinations meet this barrier and move along it until they get caught in a suitably placed basket trap (Munathi). The Osegeru is as often as not entirely below the surface of the water and just outside the mouth of the Miris River we came across a canoe and a raft containing two and one man respectively engaged in building this form of trap. We were informed that a fourth man was working on the Lake bottom pushing in the papyrus stalks. He eventually came up for air and it was amazing the amount of time he spent underneath.

TRAPS AND ARTIFICIAL WEIRS.

The Bwanza is also made of papyrus stalks. It is a small barrier built across little channels cut into the papyrus swamps or encroached out of the sandy shore either on the side of the Lake or on the river bank.

A small gap is left in the barrier, and basket traps are placed on the side away from the Lake or river at the same way be. The fish

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Both sexes drink the beer which is made from grain, but the women never drink with the men. The women make the butter.

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The men do not smelt iron, but obtain it in pig form from the Bantu Karirondo. There is even a certain prejudice against blacksmiths amongst the Ja-luo. They are called "Yotheth," and among some of the tribes constitute a separate caste called "Uvino." They forge spears, knives, bill-hooks, and axes, but their hoes are imported from their Bantu neighbours. Shields are made of buffalo or ox hide, and also of ambatch wood. Their spears have small heads, and shafts of tremendous length.

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They use clubs, and also long leaf-shaped swords, which they have borrowed from the Mami or Nandi. Bows and arrows are still employed, but the arrows are no longer poisoned. Poison was said to be derived from the venom of snakes, and also from certain herbs. Their musical instruments are very similar to those of the Karirondo Bantu.

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Girls are betrothed at the age of seven, and go to their husbands at the age of ten or eleven, payment being made by degrees over the years elapsing between the betrothal and the marriage. The girl is taken by her unmarried girl companions to her husband's house. The father of the girl kills an ox and takes the meat, together with a quantity oforghum porridge, to the bridegroom's house to provide a wedding feast. On the following day the bridegroom's brothers, and his other wives, if he has any, take the newly wedded wife back to her father's village, where there is another great feast. The bridegroom does not attend. The father of the girl next day presents his daughter with a goat, and she returns to her husband, who continues to make payments to his father-in-law. The total amount of the marriage payment may reach to six oxen, or their equivalent. If the man stops paying, his wife will leave him and go back to her father's village until the payments are resumed. If within a year of the marriage the woman does not bear a child, the husband may stop his payments, but he has no claim to the return of what has been already paid, so long as his wife remains with him. If a wife dies without having borne children, the amount paid for her is returned, unless the husband agrees to accept one of his deceased wife's sisters, for whom only a small complimentary present is paid. If a woman refuses to stop with her husband, she is given to another man, and whatever this man gives for her is paid over to her first husband. If a woman has a child and is ill-treated, she may leave her husband, but must leave her child behind with the father. If the child be a boy, when he grows up and the mother gets old, she generally returns to live with her son. If after

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a marriage has been arranged an envious father is loth to part with his daughter, the young man employs his friends to waylay the girl in the daytime. If, however, the girl after capture refuses to stop with her